

AGENDA



Recommendation for Council Action

AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL

Regular Meeting: June 28, 2018

Item Number: **002**

Austin Water

Authorize negotiation and execution of an interlocal agreement with the University of Texas to conduct a study on tawny crazy ant expansion and experimental treatment within Balcones Canyonlands Preserve sites in an amount not to exceed \$25,300.

Fiscal Note	Funding in the amount of \$25,300 is available in the 2017-2018 Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Operating Fund.
For More Information	Sherri Kuhl, 512-972-1664; Nico Hauwert, 512-972-1661; Denise Avery, 512-972-0104
Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action	June 13, 2018- Recommended by the Water and Wastewater Commission on an 8-0 vote with Commissioners Maia, Parton and Schmitt absent.

Additional Backup Information:

Austin Water's Wildland Conservation Division requests authorization to prepare and execute an agreement with the University of Texas to evaluate the expansion of tawny crazy ants across Balcones Canyonlands Preserve sites and apply experimental treatment to limit their expansion. Tawny crazy ants were discovered in the Houston area in 2002, likely transported by ship from its native South America. Since that time it has been transported to and around Austin, likely through transport of landscape materials. The invasive ants are now expanding their range on multiple Balcones Canyonlands Preserve macrosite areas including Whirlpool Cave (Convict Hill and Mopac South), McNeil Drive and Palmer Road area, and FM 620 North at Anderson Mill

Road. Tawny crazy ants swarm in large numbers, asphyxiating wildlife, preying on cave invertebrates, destroying electrical infrastructure, potentially transmitting pathogens to people and agriculture, and destroying vegetation. Both the endangered songbirds, Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo, endangered karst invertebrates, and their habitat is threatened by tawny crazy ant infestation. It has been estimated that tawny crazy ants have already caused hundreds of millions of dollars of damage in the Houston area during its decade of residence.

Dr. Ed LeBrun of University of the Texas at Austin Brackenridge Field Laboratory has studied tawny crazy ants on Balcones Canyonland Preserve sites and discovered a microsporidian (fungal) pathogen that may be effective in combatting tawny crazy ants.

The Wildland Conservation Division is made up of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve program and the Water Quality Protection Lands program protecting over 40,000 acres of land from roughly Cedar Park to Kyle. The Balcones Canyonlands Preserve was established as a result of a Federal Permit issued to the City of Austin and Travis County to authorize impacts to eight endangered species. Six cave invertebrate species, the Golden-cheeked Warbler, and Black-capped Vireo are endangered species covered under the Federal permit. This permit requires active management, monitoring, and research to ensure species protections.